



Teenage Party Prevention, Enforcement and Dispersal

Introduction

Teen parties are one of the highest risk settings for youth alcohol problems (Mayer et al., 1998; Schwartz & Little 1997; Wagenaar et al., 1993). Young people report their heaviest drinking at large parties with peers, almost all of whom are underage. These parties lack adult supervision and can lead to serious problems, including impaired driving, rape, other forms of violence, vandalism and property damage.

In 1993, Mary Kate Kelly, a high school student in Montgomery County, Northern Virginia, was killed in a fatal collision. What made this case receive significant attention was that she had attended a kegger party that was interrupted by parents returning home. Partygoers were dispersed and many, including the driver of the car Mary Kelly was riding in, were already intoxicated.

In response to this tragedy the Montgomery County Police Department, Rockville, Maryland, developed the controlled dispersal plan, which closes parties and monitors exit avenues for alcohol violations. Law enforcement agencies may implement the TAPPED strategy to suit their needs. However, the basic principles of containment and release are essential. The strategy has also been used by law enforcement agencies in Maryland and Phoenix, Arizona with outstanding results. It not only reduces the possibility of drinking and driving, but resolves the party situation without requiring return deployment to the scene.

Goals and Objectives

Enablers of underage drinking parties include attitudes of parents and the community at large. The primary goal of TAPPED is to reduce the number of teen drinking parties and driving under the influence by police working closely with parents and the community. Objectives are to:

- Form an Alcohol Enforcement Response Team or provide specialized training to patrol officers
- Increase awareness and support by involving the media, parents, and community stakeholders
- Contain party participants and control their release
- Deter future parties by citing or arresting violators

Program Components

STAFFING AND TRAINING. Although these operations often are time and effort intensive, the initial investment of officers will be worthwhile. The number of staff and hours required will vary according to the type and size of the problem in your area. Oversight of the plan can be conducted by a centralized Alcohol Enforcement Response Team or by patrol officers with specialized training.

Training will assist supervisors and officers to effectively implement the strategy. *Dispatchers* and others who receive complaint calls need to discern between adult and underage drinking party complaints. Underage drinking party complaints should be referred to the alcohol enforcement response team first. These officers will be the primary units and be the case agents/team leaders.

Officers discovering an underage drinking party in the course of other duties should not approach the home or party. They should request assistance of the Alcohol Enforcement Response Team so that a controlled dispersal plan can be implemented. Likewise, officers who see young people buying large quantities of alcohol should convey the information to the Alcohol Enforcement Response Team for investigation. Officers may inspect keg registration records at off-sale premises and alert the Alcohol Enforcement Response Team of possible underage parties.

SURVEILLANCE. Rather than responding directly to the party, surveillance should be initiated. Officers should set up their vehicles on an adjacent road or a short distance from the party site. A surveillance officer then monitors for alcohol, drug, noise and other violations, as well as noting the party size, general layout of the house/party site and other tactical considerations. Ideally, this officer should be from the Alcohol Enforcement Response Team. Plainclothes officers and/or unmarked vehicles are ideal for this surveillance. Record vehicle tag numbers of cars parked at the location. This aids in incident investigation and can be used to mail a form letter to the registered owner informing them that their vehicle was identified at a gathering that involved minors and alcohol.

MONITORING TRAFFIC. Surveillance officers can relay information about persons and vehicles leaving the party. Other officers may follow vehicles and, based on probable cause, stop the vehicle, identify the age of the occupants and determine if they have consumed

alcohol. To avoid the party host being tipped off, officers conducting the traffic stop should not reveal their knowledge of the party. Arrest of alcohol violators leaving the party reinforces a community norm that underage drinking will not be tolerated.

CONTROLLING DISPERSAL. After establishing probable cause of alcohol violations, surveillance officers should notify the team leader/supervisor. Staffing needs are then estimated for an effective and efficient controlled dispersal. The team leader/supervisor will determine officer availability and make a decision to implement the TAPPED plan. If a staffing shortage exists, station officers at each end of the street where most of the cars are parked, and establish a mini-checkpoint. Allow only sober drivers to pass, and arrest impaired drivers.

BRIEFING AND DEPLOYMENT. The team leader/supervisor selects a staging area away from the party site and officers report to this area. Hold a briefing to review the nature of the operation, goals and objectives, agency policy and to assign specific officer responsibilities. Establish teams to provide outer and inner perimeters. The outer perimeter will block the roadway to prevent impaired drivers from leaving the area. The inner perimeter team will prevent partygoers from leaving the home or immediate party area until control of the area is gained and to ensure officer safety.

Once the perimeters are established, a contact officer (usually the team leader/supervisor) will contact the homeowner or party host. The contact officer should attempt to gain entry to the home through consent, a warrant or exigency. The contact officer may be able to gain consent by explaining the legal consequences of hosting an underage drinking party to the homeowner or party host (see "Legal Issues").

SCENE SECURITY. Upon entry, gather the attendees into a secure area. The party host and the contact officer should conduct a thorough search of the premises to ensure that no one is hiding, sick or unconscious. Teens have been found hiding in crawl spaces, closets and clothes dryers. Remove disorderly or impaired persons as soon as practical and process accordingly. This is a protective sweep for persons only and not a search for contraband unless consent is expressly given for that purpose. An effective tactic for finding out who bought the keg is to call the store shown on the keg tag, get the purchaser's name, and while still at the party call out that person's name. Experience has shown the person usually unknowingly steps forward. Evidence that at least one minor in possession got their beer from that keg is sufficient to cite the keg purchaser for furnishing under Section 25658(a).

PROCESSING. Release those of legal drinking age, provided they have not committed an offense and have a safe ride home. Prepare citations and/or make physical arrests of all other offenders. Collect ID's of the party host and all observed violators. Gather evidence,

including money collected for admission/beer. Send a copy of the report to ABC to ensure follow up on any licensed business that may have provided the alcohol.

MEDIA. Media can amplify the effects of the plan and maintain community support for underage enforcement. Contact broadcast and print media prior to enforcement actions and before holidays to discourage potential violations. Encourage the media to accompany the enforcement team during the event, with the understanding that media cannot enter a private residence without the homeowner's consent.

Legal Issues

Fourth Amendment issues such as search and seizure must be considered. Therefore, agencies should review their policies with their local prosecutor's office prior to using the TAPPED strategy. Common Business and Professions Code misdemeanor violations at teen drinking parties include: 25662(a), Minor in Possession; 25660, Possession of False ID; 25658(a), Furnishing Alcohol to a Minor; 23300, Sale Without a License; 25659.5(c), Knowingly Possess Beer Keg Without ID Tag; 23399.1 Maintaining a Place for Alcohol Consumption; and 25351, Possession With Intent to Sell Alcohol Without a License. Also, Section 25662(b), Social Gatherings With Minors Consuming, provides peace officers the authority to seize alcoholic beverages upon lawful entry to a party where 10 or more minors are consuming. In addition, Section 272 PC, Contributing, applies if there are persons under age 18.

Results and Impact

Success can be measured *quantitatively* by tracking nature and number of: alcohol-related calls for service and arrests, teen-related crashes, curfew violation arrests, teen parties and parental contacts; and changes in community awareness of the problem. *Qualitative* measures include increased awareness by parents. Parents who arrive to pick up their underage child from the party area are able to see the drinking environment, including alcohol containers, drug paraphernalia and vandalism. This makes them aware of the severity of the problem. Further qualitative measures may be declarations of satisfaction from members of the community.

Funding

No specific funding is allocated to TAPPED. It is one of several components of ABC's enforcement program.

Contact Information

For further information please contact the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, 3810 Rosin Court, Suite 150, Sacramento, CA 95834
Phone (916) 263-6571; Fax (916) 263-6912